

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

104th Congress
2nd Session

Vote No. 205

July 19, 1996, 9:24 am
Page S-8331 Temp. Record

WELFARE REFORM RECONCILIATION/Vouchers and Time Limits

SUBJECT: Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 . . . S. 1956. Breaux motion to waive the Budget Act for the consideration of the Breaux amendment No. 4910.

ACTION: MOTION REJECTED, 51-47

SYNOPSIS: As reported, S. 1956, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996, will enact major welfare reforms. The Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program will be replaced with a new Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant to the States. The TANF block grant will be capped through 2001. Time limits will be placed on individuals receiving TANF benefits. Overall, the growth in non-Medicaid welfare spending will be slowed to 4.3 percent annually. The bill originally included major Medicaid reforms, but most of those provisions were stricken when the bill was reported. Without those Medicaid reforms, welfare spending will still be reduced by \$61.4 billion over 6 years.

The Breaux amendment would add that in the event that a family was denied TANF cash welfare benefits because it exceeded the 60-month Federal time limit on receiving benefits, and in the event that it did not get to keep receiving cash anyway due to a "hardship" classification, a State at its option could provide a voucher instead. In the event that a family was denied TANF cash welfare benefits because it exceeded a State time limit on receiving benefits that was less than 60 months (the bill will give States the option of setting such limits), the Breaux amendment would require the State to provide a voucher instead. Such vouchers would be used to pay for shelter, goods, and services to meet the "basic subsistence needs" of the children of the families that exceeded welfare time limits. Each State would decide the definition of "basic subsistence needs" that it would follow. Vouchers would be given directly to third parties.

Following debate, Senator Roth made the point of order that the Breaux amendment violated sections 305 and 310 of the Budget Act. Senator Breaux then moved to waive the Budget Act for the consideration of the amendment. Generally, those favoring the motion to waive favored the amendment; those opposing the motion to waive opposed the amendment.

NOTE: A three-fifths majority (60) vote is required to waive the Budget. Following the failure of the motion to waive, the point of order was upheld and the amendment thus fell.

(See other side)

YEAS (51)			NAYS (47)		NOT VOTING (2)	
Republicans (6 or 11%)	Democrats (45 or 100%)		Republicans (47 or 89%)	Democrats (0 or 0%)	Republicans (0)	Democrats (2)
Chafee	Akaka	Hollings	Abraham	Hatch		Nunn- ²
Jeffords	Baucus	Inouye	Ashcroft	Hatfield		Pryor- ²
Kassebaum	Biden	Johnston	Bennett	Helms		
Snowe	Bingaman	Kennedy	Bond	Hutchison		
Specter	Boxer	Kerrey	Brown	Inhofe		
Warner	Bradley	Kerry	Burns	Kempthorne		
	Breaux	Kohl	Campbell	Kyl		
	Bryan	Lautenberg	Coats	Lott		
	Bumpers	Leahy	Cochran	Lugar		
	Byrd	Levin	Cohen	Mack		
	Conrad	Lieberman	Coverdell	McCain		
	Daschle	Mikulski	Craig	McConnell		
	Dodd	Moseley-Braun	D'Amato	Murkowski		
	Dorgan	Moynihan	DeWine	Nickles		
	Exon	Murray	Domenici	Pressler		
	Feingold	Pell	Faircloth	Roth		
	Feinstein	Reid	Frahm	Santorum		
	Ford	Robb	Frist	Shelby		
	Glenn	Rockefeller	Gorton	Simpson		
	Graham	Sarbanes	Gramm	Smith		
	Harkin	Simon	Grams	Stevens		
	Heflin	Wellstone	Grassley	Thomas		
		Wyden	Gregg	Thompson		
				Thurmond		

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

Those favoring the motion to waive contended:

Children should not be punished for the sins of their parents. Under this bill, if a parent reaches the lifetime, 5-year limit on receiving benefits, benefits will be denied. States will not have the option of providing any additional help under the TANF program. We guarantee that human nature being what it is, there will be some such parents who will exhaust their eligibility for benefits, and their children may well end up suffering as a result. The Breaux amendment would provide an alternative. It would require States to determine if the children of families that reached their eligibility limits were having their basic needs met. If they were not, then they would give vouchers not to their parents, but directly to third-party providers who would provide the needed care to the children. If States exercised their option of having a lifetime limit for benefits of less than 5 years, then providing vouchers would not be an option--it would be a requirement. The Breaux amendment would make very modest changes that would give States the option of protecting children whose parents stayed on welfare for too long. States themselves would decide the protection that was needed, and parents would not benefit in any way. We agree with time limits for welfare, but we do not agree with time limits that hurt children. We therefore strongly support the motion to waive the Budget Act for the consideration of the Breaux amendment.

Those opposing the motion to waive contended:

The main reason for creating welfare was to help children. The main reason for reforming welfare is that it has proven in practice to hurt children. The best of intentions has had the most horrible of results. Welfare has trapped successive generations in dependency with all of its attendant social pathologies. For many welfare recipients, it has become a permanent way of life. If we are going to end welfare dependency, we are going to have to impose strict time limits. When people go on welfare, they must understand that they are only going to get it for a short time period. Permanent dependency must not be an option. The Breaux amendment would allow dependency to continue without any time limit at all by replacing cash benefits with voucher benefits. This action would make it more likely that people would still not work, and their children would continue in the cycle of welfare dependency. We need to break this chain. Under this bill, welfare recipients who use up their lifetime eligibility for cash welfare benefits will still be eligible for food stamps, housing assistance, the Women, Infants, and Children Program, and literally dozens of other Federal, State, and local welfare programs. All they will lose is the cash. Further, a hardship exemption will be given that will allow States to let up to 20 percent of their welfare recipients exceed their lifetime limits. Thus, the limits in this bill are already lenient; weakening them even more, as proposed by the Breaux amendment, would make them nearly meaningless. States, at their option, could spend virtually the same amount of Federal tax funds giving vouchers as they currently spend giving cash, and nothing would be gained. We oppose that option, and thus strongly oppose the Breaux amendment.